

## MARY STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION FORM

### 1. NAME OF DISTRICT

Mary Street Historic District

### 2. GEOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

The district boundaries follow the length of East Mary Street between Newning Avenue and East Side Drive. The district includes homes on the north and south side of the 500 block of E. Mary Street. The district is bordered by Stacy Park to the west.

### 3. PROPERTIES WITHIN THE DISTRICT

There are 19 properties within the district covering a total of 2.85 acres; 17 properties (89%) are contributing to the historic character of the district and 2 properties (11%) are non-contributing. In order to be considered contributing, properties must date to the district's period of significance (1929-1939) and maintain integrity (see **Section 7**). The two properties that are not contributing were still constructed in the period of significance; however they have been incompatibly modified.

### 4. PRINCIPAL ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND PERIODS OF CONSTRUCTION

The Craftsman style is predominant in the district, but several other styles exist in the district as well.

Style	Percentage of Buildings	Period of Construction
Craftsman	53%	1929-39
Tudor Revival	26%	1930-36
Minimal Traditional	11%	1935-39
Colonial Revival	5%	1931
Neoclassical	5%	1931

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES IN THE DISTRICT

Address	Construction Year	Style	Contributing to LHD	TCAD Property ID / Map ID	Acreage
500 E Mary St	1931	Colonial Revival	Yes	283389	0.1507
501 E Mary St	1931	Craftsman	Yes	283348	0.162
502 E Mary St	1930	Revival - Tudor	Yes	283388	0.1489
503 E Mary St	1931	Neoclassical	Yes	283349	0.1433
504 E Mary St	1930	Revival - Tudor	Yes	283387	0.1539
505 E Mary St	1939	Minimal Traditional	Yes	283350	0.1501
506 E Mary St	1931	Craftsman	Yes	283386	0.156
507 E Mary St	1931	Craftsman	Yes	283351	0.1423
508 E Mary St	1933	Revival - Tudor	Yes	283385	0.1642
509 E Mary St	1929	Craftsman	Yes	283352	0.1479
510 E Mary St	1936	Revival - Tudor	No	283384	0.1537
511 E Mary St	1933	Craftsman	Yes	283353	0.1409
512 E Mary St	1935	Minimal Traditional	Yes	283383	0.156
513 E Mary St	1939	Craftsman	Yes	283354	0.1242
514 E Mary St	1935	Craftsman	Yes	283382	0.1673
515 E Mary St	1933	Revival - Tudor	Yes	283355	0.1391
516 E Mary St	1933	Craftsman	Yes	283381	0.161
517 E Mary St	1929	Craftsman	Yes	283356	0.1187
518 E Mary St	1931	Craftsman	No	283380	0.1673
					<b>2.8475</b>

NOTE: A demolition permit has been issued for 501 E. Mary St. The existing structure has not yet been moved/demolished.



**506 East Mary Street** is a good example of the **Craftsman** style in the Mary Street Historic District. This rectangular-plan single-family dwelling was constructed in 1931. The structure has wood clapboard siding and rests on a masonry pier-and-beam foundation. The wood-sash windows are double-hung with wood-frame screens. The glazed front door also has a screen door. The building is capped by a front-facing jerkinhead gable roof with an extended cornice, exposed rafters, and brackets. The partial-width front porch features a smaller jerkinhead gable and mimics the detailing of the larger gable. The porch is enclosed by wood railings and banisters and has a roof supported by square posts.

**505 East Mary Street** is a good example of the **Minimal Traditional** style. Constructed in 1939, this single story house has clapboard siding and a cross-gabled roof. The roof is low-pitched except for steeply pitched cross-gables. Consistent with the simplicity of design common to Minimal Traditional style homes, the house has little architectural detailing. The windows are double hung wood. A small entry porch features metal porch railings.



**502 East Mary Street** is a good example of the **Tudor Revival** style. The house was constructed in 1930 and is clad in the original wooden “teardrop” siding. The roof features two steeply-pitched front gables, one with a Tudor attic vent and one (the entry porch) with half-timbering.

## 5. PERIOD(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance for the Mary Street Historic District is 1929 to 1939. Mary Street was platted in 1928 as part of the Blue Bonnet Hills Subdivision; the first home in the district was constructed the following year (see **Section 9**). The final year of the period of significance is 1939, after which all construction on the street was completed and no additional homes were built.

## 6. ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION OF THE DISTRICT

### A. STORIES

There are four two-story buildings in the district, two of which are non-contributing. The remainder are single-story contributing buildings.

### B. MATERIALS

#### **Walls**

Almost 85 percent of contributing buildings in the district have wood cladding. One contributing building is clad in asbestos siding, another in vinyl, and another in stucco.

### Roofs

Eighty-five percent of homes in the district have composition shingle roofs. The remaining 15 percent have metal roofs.

### Windows

Over 89 percent of windows in the district are double-hung wood-sash windows. Other window sash materials include vinyl and aluminum.

#### C. ROOF TYPES

The most prevalent roof type in the district is side-gabled (40 percent), followed by front-gabled (25 percent). Other roof types include cross-gabled, hipped, and flat.

#### D. ADDITIONS

Six contributing buildings have compatible additions that do not compromise their integrity. Additions are commonly found at the rear, are constructed of materials that complement the original building, and do not overwhelm the historic portion of the house in form or scale. **500 Mary St.** provides an example of an addition that is compatible with the existing character of the house.



#### E. PORCHES

Front porches are a significant architectural feature of houses in the district. Porches are present on the vast majority of contributing structures: over 80 percent have a full- or partial-width front porch.

#### F. CHIMNEYS

Only 1 contributing building in the district has a chimney which is constructed from stone.

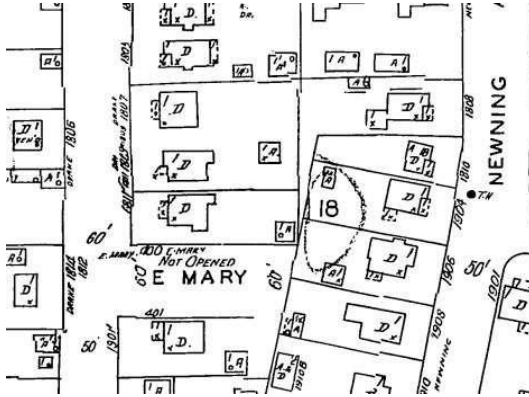
## 7. ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRITY

The evaluation of architectural integrity and the determination of which buildings are contributing and non-contributing to the historic district was made by architectural historians at Preservation Central, 823 Harris Ave., Austin, TX 78705. They meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications for an Architectural Historian, as described in Code of Federal Regulations Title 36, Chapter I, Part 61.

Individual structures were evaluated to determine whether each building has retained sufficient historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance. The National

Park Service has identified seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Structures that have lost integrity were determined to be non-contributing to the district.

Two houses built during the period of significance lack sufficient integrity to contribute to the historic character of the district, due to incompatible large-scale additions and replacement or removal of character-defining features. Modifications were considered in sum for each property. Replacement of doors or windows alone did not necessarily disqualify a structure's contributing status; nor did porch enclosures, as some buildings still convey their historic appearance with enclosed partial-width porches.



Section of E. Mary Street shown on 1962 Sanborn map

unpaved throughout the period of significance, based on an analysis of historic aerial photography. Although the street has since been improved, it retains its original width and configuration sans sidewalks.

The district as a whole retains a remarkable degree of integrity. Its spatial organization has remained relatively unchanged since 1929. Although early maps showed a portion of E. Mary Street west of Newning Street, this section was never opened and was in-filled with lots sometime after 1962. In 1932, the residents of Lockhart Drive petitioned City Council to open the street from Brackenridge Street to Newning Avenue, which required the purchase of one lot; the remaining land between the lot and Brackenridge Street was donated by the owner. Mary Street was

Eighty-nine percent of homes in the district are contributing structures. There has been no new ground-up construction in the district since the end of the period of significance.

## 8. BUILDING LOCATIONS AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Buildings are generally oriented towards the street and are set back from the lot line by around twenty feet. In a typical small lot, a driveway will extend from the street past the side of the house to the rear of the lot where there might be a backyard, a garage, or other outbuildings such as sheds or studios. Most of the driveways are single-car width. Most homes have detached garages. Historically, the majority of homes had garages as well.

Many of the district's lots are shaded by dense mature tree cover, especially on the north side of the district. The lot at the intersection of 500 E. Mary St. and Newning Ave. has some of the largest live oaks in the Travis Heights neighborhood.

Ecclectic designed landscape elements characterize the district. Generous yards, commonly twenty feet deep, are heavily covered with dense groundcover, plantings, fences and stone-lined gardens or open grass lawns with a few shade trees. Because there are no sidewalks in the district, many yards have walkways of various materials/orientation from the street to the front door or porch. These walkways are generally separate from driveways, which often lead



to the side or rear of the buildings. On some lots, fences and short retaining walls line the edge of the street.

## 9. HISTORIC CONTEXT OF THE DISTRICT

### SOUTH AUSTIN CONTEXT

The Colorado River served as the southern boundary of the 1839 plat of Austin; the city limits were not extended south of the river until 1891. Much of the development history of South Austin is related to the development of transportation networks across the river – initially ferries and later bridges.

In 1852, James G. Swisher granted Travis County right of way through his farm for a road connecting Austin to San Antonio that would later become South Congress Avenue. Development was limited, however, by the lack of a reliable crossing over the Colorado River. After the collapse of several wooden bridges, an iron bridge was constructed in 1883, financed by a toll. In 1876, the Swisher addition was platted from the Swisher family farm on both sides of South Congress as the first urban planning act in South Austin.

In 1886, the City of Austin and Travis County purchased the bridge and opened it to the public free of charge. At the time the bridge was opened for free passage, two residential areas had been platted south of the river in anticipation of the desirability of the area for development.

In 1928, the Dallas engineering firm Koch and Fowler developed the first comprehensive planning document for the city of Austin, which recommended that all of the land along Blunn Creek between the river and East Live Oak Street become parkland. In 1929 the City purchased almost all of the land that would comprise Big and Little Stacy parks and the greenbelt from individual property owners. This park currently abuts the eastern border of the Mary Street Historic District.

The late 1920s and early 1930s were an important period in the development of South Austin. New Deal programs helped to counter the effects of the Great Depression and further urban development, as workers paved streets and built bridges and parks. Although citizens had been petitioning the City to pave South Congress since at least 1916, the 90-foot-wide paving to Riverside Drive was not completed until 1931.

A flood in June 1935 galvanized the development of South Congress as a commercial center. After the flood caused significant damage to South Congress, the City financed flood repairs to the road and rebuilt many of the damaged buildings. The following year, the *Austin Statesman* noted that the businesses that were destroyed “have been replaced by bigger, more attractive structures.”

Improvements to infrastructure—especially bridges connecting the area with downtown—promoted commercial development along South Congress, the nearest commercial area where Mary Street residents would shop and socialize. The Austin Motel was established in 1938 and the San Jose Motel was built a year later. According to a 1939 issue of the *South Austin Advocate* reflecting on the history of South Austin, in 1909 “South Congress was a

muddy lane with three grocery stores and one market”; by 1939 there were 13 groceries and markets, along with many other types of businesses.

In 1941, the South Lamar bridge was constructed, providing an alternative to the Congress Avenue bridge. At the time, development in South Austin still paled in comparison to the growth of the city north of the river. In 1950, the population south of the river was only 15,000, compared to the citywide population of 132,000. Travis High School, the first high school in South Austin, was constructed in 1953. In 1956 Oltorf Street was extended to connect Lamar Boulevard and the new Interregional Highway (I-35).

#### BLUE BONNET HILLS

The Mary Street Historic District is part of the Blue Bonnet Hills Addition (see 1932 and 1965 Sanborn maps in Appendix for location of Mary Street Historic District within this subdivision). The Paul H. Pfeifer Subdivision was platted in March 1928, composed of 33 lots along Leland Street and Terrace Drive, east of Brackenridge Street. One month later, the subdivision was expanded under the name “Blue Bonnet Hills Addition,” which extended the boundaries to the north and east for a total of nine blocks, with between 5 and 23 lots in each block. Of the nine blocks, three became part of the Blunn Creek Greenbelt and were never developed as residential property.

Blue Bonnet Hills was more than 60 percent built out by 1935, with an overwhelming majority of the homes executed in the Craftsman and Tudor Revival styles. The demographics of residents differed notably from other South Austin subdivisions: in contrast to the wealthy residents of nearby Fairview Park, Blue Bonnet Hills was a working-class neighborhood comprised of a mix of owners and renters.

The first homes in the Addition were constructed in 1928 on Lockhart Drive and Terrace Drive. Four more homes were constructed in 1929, followed by a surge of building activity in the early 1930s. Based on data from Sanborn maps and city directories, it is estimated that 74 homes, or approximately 63 percent of the Addition, had been constructed by 1935. At this time, within seven years of its platting, development was spread relatively uniformly throughout the district. Development continued in the late 1930s and then slowed, with fewer than 15 homes constructed from the 1940s through the 1950s. According to Sanborn maps, only five vacant lots remained within the Addition in 1962. An uptick in new home construction beginning in 2006 illustrates the renewed interest in the area as an attractive, close-in neighborhood. This area is so desirable that buyers are willing to purchase developed lots and demolish existing structures to make way for larger modern residences.

#### MARY STREET

All of the contributing properties in the Mary Street Historic District were built during a period of rapid growth in the Blue Bonnet Hills Addition, from 1929 to 1939.

An analysis of early residents of the district utilizing Austin city directories and the 1940 Census suggests that Mary Street was part of a working-class neighborhood comprised of a mix of homeowners and some renters, including many World War I veterans. Early residents commuted to workplaces downtown. When the neighborhood was initially developed, its

distance from downtown was a deterrent to wealthier families who preferred to live closer to amenities and businesses.

Many residents were employed in federal and state government. Edward Sponberg of 500 E. Mary Street was a postal worker. Leslie Sedwick of 502 E. Mary Street was a firefighter. William M. Ferguson, the first owner of 508 E. Mary Street, was an IRS auditor from 1932 until 1958. Multiple residents were employed by the Steck Company, a printing and office supply company located at 9<sup>th</sup> and Lavaca streets. Elgin O'Burrer, the first resident of 512 E. Mary Street, was a barber at the Driskill Barber Shop from 1932 until at least 1949. He then became proprietor of the Commodore Perry Hotel Barber Shop at 800 Brazos Street. Other residents worked as mechanics, retail sales clerks, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, beauticians, and stenographers.

Many of the initial residents of Mary Street lived there for extended periods of time. For example, Edward Sponberg and his wife Hattie lived at 500 E. Mary Street from 1929 until at least 1980, Leslie Sedwick lived at 502 E. Mary Street from 1930 until at least 1966, and Lois Huber lived at 516 E. Mary Street from 1930 until 1986.

#### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Though only one block long, the Mary Street Historic District is in close geographic proximity to an important development trend that shaped the growth of Austin and other cities around the country.

The rapid growth of American cities following the Civil War was largely unplanned and caused concern among architects. As director of the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition, architect Daniel Burnham helped to spread a growing interest in urban planning that would continue to develop over the next several decades as the City Beautiful Movement. This concept promoted order and harmony in architecture and urban design, including incorporation of parks and green spaces.

In 1928, the Dallas engineering firm Koch and Fowler developed the first comprehensive planning document for the city of Austin, which drew heavily on elements of the City Beautiful movement and the inspiration of its leaders like Frederic Law Olmsted. The Blunn Creek Greenbelt is reminiscent of the "necklace" configuration of many of Olmsted's parks. Part of the land that comprises the greenbelt was initially platted as part of the Blue Bonnet Hills subdivision in 1928. The following spring, the City purchased almost all of the land that would comprise the greenbelt. Stacy Park, which directly abuts the eastern side of the Mary Street District is part of the Greenbelt.

#### DEVELOPER PAUL PFEIFER

Mary Street was platted as part of the Blue Bonnet Hills Addition by Paul Herbert Pfeifer, a real estate and insurance agent. He is listed in the 1924 Austin city directory as a salesman at Carl Wendlandt & Sons, a real estate firm. In 1927 he was employed as an agent at Hal Hailey Company; by 1929 he had hung out his own shingle as Pfeifer & Baggett Real Estate, Loans, and Insurance with an office on Lavaca Street. In the 1930-1931 city directory, the company is listed as Paul H. Pfeifer Company Real Estate, Loans, and Insurance with an office on Colorado Street.



Pfeiffer reported that his father was born in Germany and his mother in Sweden. Pfeifer attended school through the sixth grade. In 1927, he married Mildred Giles, a college-educated teacher from Manor, Texas. Three years later, the Pfeifers owned a home at 4209 Avenue G in Hyde Park; by 1940, they had two sons and were living at 911 W. 5th Street in what is now considered downtown Austin. Pfeifer was listed as the owner of the dwelling, with five other households listed as renters at the address. By 1947, the Pfeifers had moved to 4413 Avenue G in Hyde Park. Paul Pfeifer died in Austin in 1989 at age 94.

#### NEIGHBORING SUBDIVISIONS

When Mary Street was established as part of the Blue Bonnet Hills subdivision in 1928, most of the immediately surrounding land had already been platted. Fairview Park (1886) and Newning and Warner's Subdivision (1894) were to the west, Pleasant View (1915) and the Swisher Addition (1876) lay to the south, and Travis Heights (1913) was to the east.

In 1886 Charles Newning bought the northern portion of the Swisher farm and developed the addition called Fairview Park. Sales slowed after the initial opening, and parts of the neighborhood were subdivided to create smaller lots. Newning established a line of horse-drawn omnibuses that carried southsiders across the bridge; the fare was exclusive of the bridge toll, which he subsidized. Although Fairview Park enjoyed some early success, including the construction of several large homes for prominent Austin businessmen, growth in the district was limited by two factors: the small market for large homes and lots, as well as wealthy Austinites' disinclination to live south of the river away from the employment and political center of town. Subsequent development like Mary Street focused on smaller lots with solidly built homes for working-class families.

Travis Heights was platted by Charles Newning and General William Stacy in 1913. Development was slow until the 1920s, but by 1931, 600 lots had been sold in the subdivision, with 171 homes built. By 1937, over 300 homes had been built, and developer Harwood Stacy described the year as the neighborhood's best to date. Like Fairview Park, the subdivision contained grand Victorian homes on large lots.

More modest homes dominated development in the late 1920s and later. Within the earliest platted subdivisions, bungalows were built on previously undeveloped lots, creating an eclectic mix of styles and periods of construction. Travis Heights-area subdivisions platted in the 1920s and later reflected more rapid and uniform development in terms of style and scale.

The smaller Roy C. Archer subdivision was platted subsequent to Mary Street and Bluebonnet Hills in 1935.

The style, scale, and age of the housing stock on Mary Street is very similar to that of subdivisions around Blue Bonnet Hills: primarily one-story, modest-scale homes in the Craftsman, Tudor Revival, and Minimal Traditional styles. The Craftsman and Tudor Revival Styles are particularly well-represented.

#### INDIVIDUALLY LANDMARKED BUILDINGS IN THE DISTRICT

There are no homes or buildings in the district that have been landmarked individually.

## 10. ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDERS

No architects or builders have been identified for contributing buildings within the Mary Street Historic District. The neighborhood likely includes a mix of custom homes designed by architects and vernacular homes inspired by model house designs and published pattern books, constructed by local contractors.

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Mary Street Local Historic District Nomination

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NOMINATION PREPARED BY

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502 E. Mary St.  
Austin, TX 78704  
917-328-3357

NEIGHBORHOOD REPRESENTATIVE

James Bilodeau  
502 E. Mary St.  
Austin, TX 78704  
917-328-3357



# Mary Street Local Historic District Nomination

THE STATE OF TEXAS: Whereas, I, Paul H. Pfeiffer, of the County of Travis, in the State of Texas, being the owner of 15.82 acres a part of the Chas Gillette 36-acre tract and 4 acres also a part of said Gillette tract, and also 2 acres in Lot 6-C, of Subdiv. Subdivision all out of the Isaac Decker League in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, did on the 2nd day of March, A.D. 1928, subdivide a part of the above tracts into four blocks numbered from 1 to 4, inclusive; and

Witness, an error was made in the platting of Block 4, and am desirous of making a correction of said Block 4 and am further desirous of subdividing the entire three tracts above described;

Now, therefore, know all men by these presents: that I, the said Paul H. Pfeiffer, have re-subdivided the said Block No. 4 according to the plat hereto attached, and have further subdivided the tracts described in paragraph one above according to the said plat hereto attached, and the streets shown on said plat are hereby dedicated to public use.

Witness my hand this 10th day of April, A.D. 1928

*Paul H. Pfeiffer*

THE STATE OF TEXAS: Before me, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared Paul H. Pfeiffer, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office, this 11th day of April, A.D. 1928

*Notary Public, Travis County, Texas*

FILED 3:30 PM APRIL 11, 1928  
RECORDED 4:31 PM APRIL 15, 1928

Map of Block 4, Lot 6-C, of Subdiv. Subdivision all out of the Isaac Decker League in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, as shown on the plat attached hereto, and as the same may be known as, was 1928 in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas.

Surveyed & subdivided 3-12-28

Approved March 28, 1928

*City Engineer, Austin, Texas*

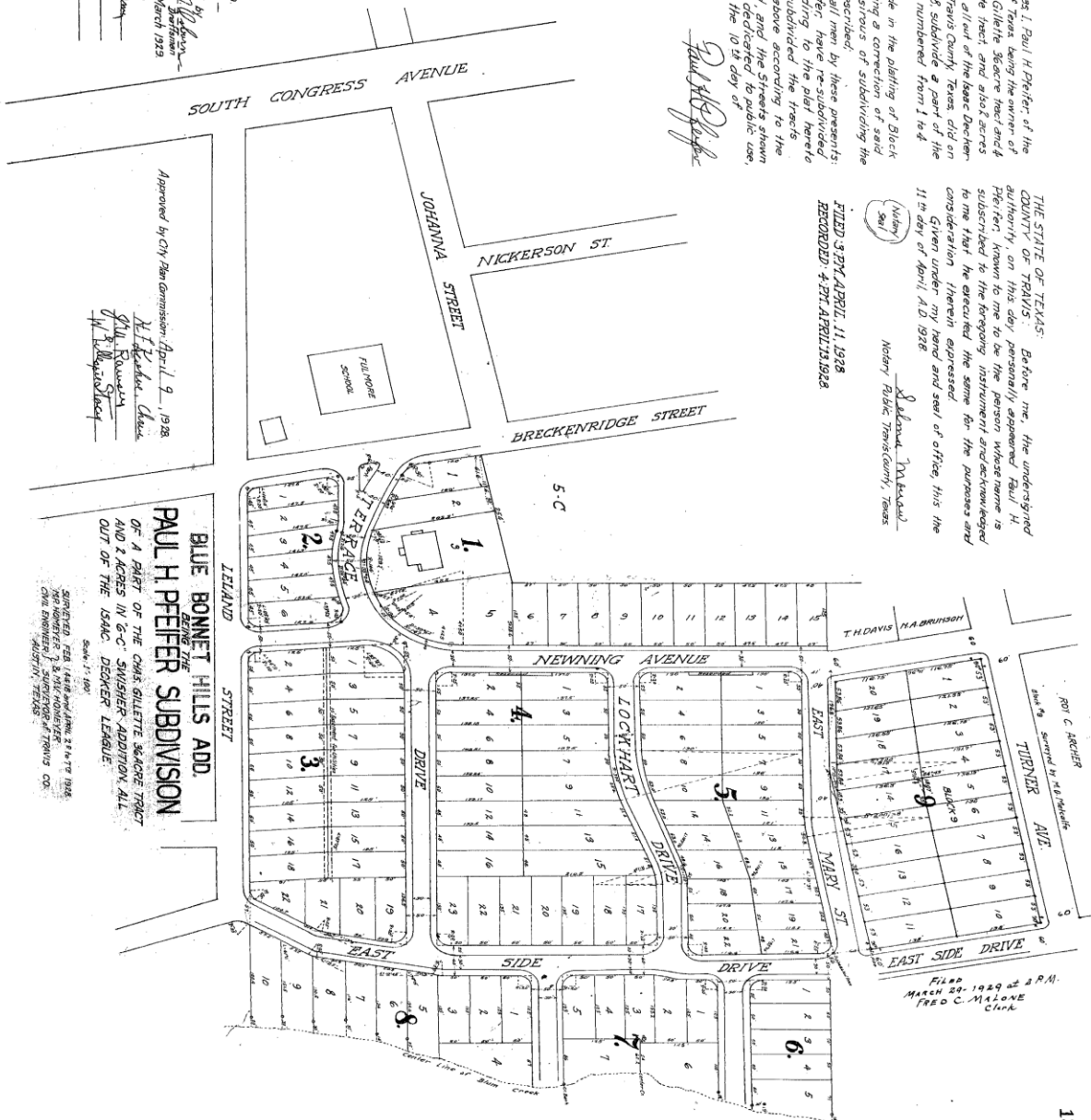
Approved by City Plan Commission, March 1928

*City Plan Commission*

*Paul H. Pfeiffer*

*Notary Public*

Scale 1" = 100'



PAUL H. PFEIFFER SUBDIVISION  
OF A PART OF THE CHAS GILLETTE 36-ACRE TRACT  
AND 2 ACRES IN 6-C, SWISHER ADDITION, ALL  
OUT OF THE ISAAC DECKER LEAGUE

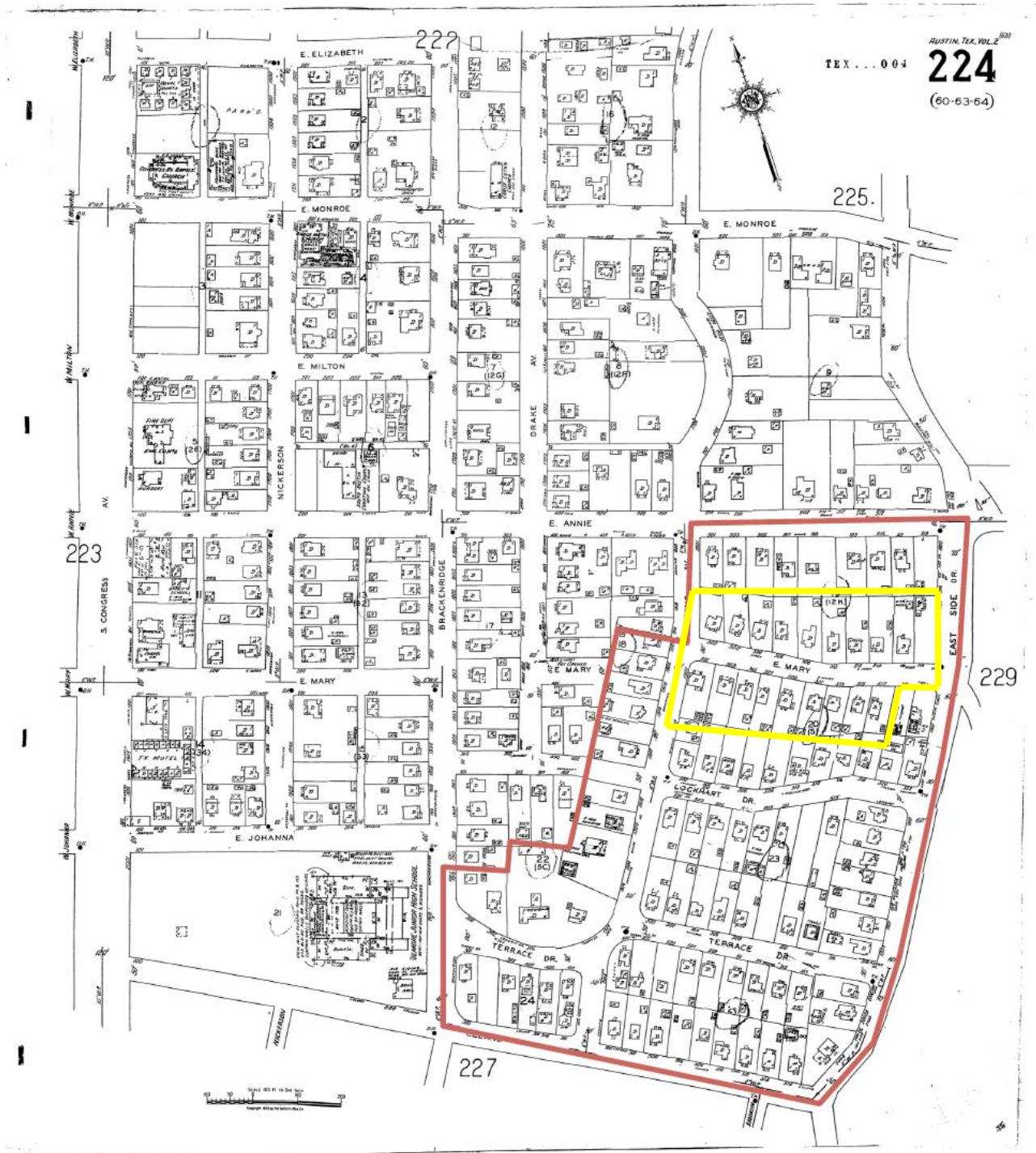
PREPARED BY J. B. HUGHES  
CHAS. GILLETTE TRACT  
AUSTIN, TEXAS



Mary Street Local Historic District Nomination



Mary Street Local Historic District Nomination



1962 Sanborn

## Mary Street Local Historic District Nomination

### Mary Street Historic District Boundaries (and Tax Parcel Map)



- + = Contributing property
- = Signed in support